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The Study of American Politics

A BIBLIOGRAPHIC SURVEY

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Introduction

The Currents in American Scholarship series offers Americanists abroad updates on the status of theory and practice in disciplines relevant to the study of the society, culture and institutions of the United States of America. Prominent scholars from across the U.S. graciously accepted the invitation of the Study of the U.S. Branch to author annotated bibliographies. We hope the series proves to be valuable in introducing or refreshing courses on the United States, or expanding library collections.

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The Study of American Politics

A BIBLIOGRAPHIC SURVEY

American politics is one of the four main fields that form the discipline of political science in American universities, the other three being comparative politics, international relations and political theory. As an academic field, American politics takes its special character from the obvious fact that it focuses on the political life of a single nation. Comparative perspectives have been increasingly encouraged in recent years, yet the fact remains that most scholars within the field concentrate almost entirely on the American political system. It is an open question whether this focus represents an unfortunate parochialism or a reasonable strategy for studying a nation whose politics are, if not unique, then certainly sharply distinct from other industrialized democracies.

Apart from its national subject matter, American politics has been an arena for the major methodological struggles of the entire discipline. American politics was the center of political science's behavioral revolution in the years following World War II, and in recent decades the field has hosted some of the strongest reactions against it. As shown in Gabriel Almond's "Political Science: A History of the Discipline" (1996), the study of American politics before behavioralism was largely dominated by work describing formal government institutions and the legal rules binding them. Robert Dahl's "The Behavioral Approach in Political Science: Epitaph for a Monument to a Successful Protest" (1961) outlines how behavioralism insisted that political science remodel its methodology with the aim of achieving something like the explanatory rigor of the natural sciences. Political science should form explicit hypotheses about the causal relationships driving political action and then test them on the basis of empirically observable phenomena. Preferably, these tests would use statistical techniques that were even then growing increasingly sophisticated. Bernard Crick's *The American Science of Politics* (1959) demonstrates that the overall goal of the behavioralists was to build theories of higher and higher generality that explained ever-greater amounts of political life.

The push under behavioralism for parsimonious and universal explanations led to other important methodological commitments. Rather than focus on institutions that varied from setting to setting, behavioralism sought units of analysis that remained the same regardless of context. For some, particularly those who specialized in the new techniques of survey research, the behavior of individuals formed the irreducible core of political action and offered the best hope for constructing universal theories. The early research on voting behavior collected by Angus Campbell and his colleagues in *The American Voter* (1960) is a prominent example of this approach. For others, known as pluralists, the different interest groups in a society were the proper foundation for studying politics. Representative works in this tradition include Robert Dahl's *Who Governs? Democracy* and *Power in an American City* (1961) and David Truman's *The Governmental Process: Political Interests and Public Opinion* (1971).

Under the behavioral approach, the distinction between politics inside and politics outside formal government institutions was downgraded in importance. Interest group leaders and government officials were all part of the same policy process and subject to the same kind of influences. As to the nature of these influences, behavioralists tended to emphasize the irrational impulses and attachments driving political behavior, an emphasis in line with the prestige of psychology in the immediate postwar years. Harold Lasswell's "The Impact of Psychoanalytic Thinking on the Social Sciences" (1956) is an early examination of this turn in political science research. Finally, as part of behavioralism's drive for scientific rigor, political science would also strictly limit itself to the realm of provable empirical *facts* and leave questions of moral *values* outside its purview.

The behavioral movement achieved preeminence in the study of American politics by the beginning of the 1970s, but it never gained total control. A significant number of American politics scholars refused allegiance to its new model for political science. Holding themselves apart from methodological strife, they produced careful examinations of American institutions and public policies, with little or no pretence that they were helping to build a universal explanation of political life. Among studies of this nature, James Q. Wilson's *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (1989), Martha Derthick's *Policymaking for Social Security* (1979), and Aaron Wildavsky's *The New Politics of the Budgetary Process* (1992) deserve special mention as three of the most important works of the modern era.

The behavioral movement has also came under direct criticism. One important strand of protest targets behavioralism's attempt to divide facts from values and exclude normative considerations from political science, arguing that this leaves political science unable to speak to the hopes and desires of ordinary citizens for an improved political system. Works like Leo Strauss' "Epilogue" to *The Scientific Study of Politics* (1962) and James Ceaser's *Liberal Democracy and Political Science* (1990) have insisted that without a role for moral principles political science has no reasoned criteria for deciding what to study. Why analyze the forces sustaining American democracy if you cannot say why it is important that democracy be sustained? This critique has been influential, at least to the extent that political scientists are less likely now to speak casually about an easy division between facts and values. In addition, efforts to illustrate a political science that combined facts and values in the American context prompted new inquiries into the American Founding and to the tradition of political science to which it gave birth, often drawing as well on themes first addressed by Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*. Herbert Storing's *What the Anti-Federalists Were For* (1981), Michael Zuckert's *The Natural Rights Republic: Studies in the Foundation of the American Political Tradition* (1996), and Thomas West's *Vindicating the Founders: Race, Sex, Class and Justice in the Origins of America* (1997) are important works in this line of scholarship.

Two other reactions against behavioralism have had an even wider influence in reshaping the American politics field: rational choice and historical institutionalism. Rational choice attacked the behavioral approach for failing to live up to its own goals. As much as the behavioralists, proponents of rational choice methods want political science to achieve a methodological rigor and explanatory power approaching that of the physical sciences. They argue that in practice behavioralism follows a path that will never succeed; its approach to theory building is hopelessly inductive and piecemeal, pursuing *ad hoc* explanations for different phenomena without real hope of uniting them into a consistent and coherent explanation. The review essay "Formal Rational Choice Theory: A Cumulative Science of Politics" (1993) by Steven Lalman and his colleagues is a sustained brief for the capacity of rational choice to build a universal theory of politics. In contrast to behavioralism's inductive approach, rational choice begins with a deductive theory drawn from economics. It assumes that individuals in politics, like individuals in the economy, are rational actors who maximize their utility. From this and a number of subsidiary principles, rational choice schol-

ars have devised explanatory models for a large range of political activities, pressing into areas of politics that, they claim, behavioralism had neglected. Kenneth Shepsle and Mark Bonchek's *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior and Institutions* (1997) is a sound introduction to rational choice's deductive foundations and its wide explanatory ambitions. While behavioralists focused on individuals and groups often to the exclusion of formal institutions, rational choice scholars have done a large amount of work showing how institutions decisively structure the choices individuals make. Kenneth Shepsle's "Institutional Equilibrium and Equilibrium Institutions" (1986) and Barry Weingast's "Rational Choice Institutionalism" (2002) present detailed overviews of this strand of research. And of course the rationality assumption itself is a standing challenge to the important strand of behavioralism that emphasized the role of irrational habits and impulses in driving political behavior.

The rational choice approach has met with serious criticism. Donald Green and Ian Shapiro's *Pathologies of Rational Choice: A Critique of Applications in Political Science* (1994) and the collection edited by Jeffrey Friedman, *The Rational Choice Controversy* (1996), provide extensive coverage of the methodological debate that has been sparked by the rational choice theory. Political scientists of rival persuasions, behavioralist or otherwise, have argued that rational choice models often have little or no confirmation in actual data. Critics have also charged that the emphasis in rational choice theory on material self-interest presents an impoverished picture of human motivation. Rational choice cannot deal effectively, for example, with the deeper elements of statesmanship. As seen in John Ferejohn's "Rationality and Interpretation" (1991), many rational choice proponents reply that their approach actually allows for a near limitless range of motivations; but opponents respond that this understanding of rationality saves rational choice from reductionism only at the expense of making it so broad and thin as to be virtually meaningless.

Historical institutionalism, the other great reaction against behavioralism, is a far more diffuse movement than rational choice. Nevertheless, there are enough common themes in work being done across many segments of the field to justify treating it as a general approach. In contrast to its two rivals, historical institutionalism places less importance on building abstract and universal theories of politics. Paul Pierson and Theda Skocpol's "Historical Institutionalism in Contemporary Political Science" (2002) shows that while broader theories are not ignored either in developing research or assessing findings, the empha-

sis is on finding an explanation for specific features of the political system, especially those that seem important for contemporary politics. Historical institutionalists typically argue that such lasting and important features of a nation's politics are best understood as developing over extended periods of time. As a result, there has been a strong revival in historical research by political scientists in recent decades, following a period of relative neglect for historical inquiry brought on by the behavioral revolution. This change is detailed in David Robertson's "History, Behavioralism, and the Return to Institutionalism in American Political Science" (1994).

As the label indicates, historical institutionalism also differs from behavioralism in the emphasis it places on institutions. The mediating force of institutions always shapes the impact of individuals and groups on politics. In this historical institutionalism is at one with rational choice, but it adds that institutions shape more than the range of available choices actors have to satisfy their preferences; they help to mold and change the preferences themselves. Sven Steinmo and Kathleen Thelen's "Introduction" to *Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics* (1993) outlines this feature of the approach. The theme of malleable preferences is further extended by a prominent strand of historical institutionalism that highlights the importance of normative standards, themselves a kind of institution, in structuring politics. Individuals are not only driven by what is advantageous to them; they are bound by what they see as legitimate and proper. James March and Johann Olsen's *Rediscovering Institutions* (1989) and Rogers Smith's "Political Jurisprudence, the New Institutionalism and the Future of Public Law" (1988) are important works in this tradition.

These waves of methodological controversy have washed over the study of American politics, each leaving its lasting mark. Interestingly, the field still largely organizes itself around the traditional institutional framework that held sway before the behavioral revolution, with some new divisions added to accommodate methodological developments. The rest of this essay will examine the current state of research in selected areas of concentration within American politics, including: American Political Development, Congress, the Courts and Public Law, the Presidency, Political Parties and Political Behavior.

American Political Development

The growing popularity of historical institutionalism is most strongly centered in a subfield known as American Political Development

(APD). Karen Orren and Steven Skowronek's review essay "American Political Development" (2002) shows how over the last twenty years APD scholars have built up a broad literature explaining the historical origins and development of certain distinguishing features of the American polity. Without necessarily supporting the theme that American politics is exceptional or *sui generis*, most of the authors in this field have at least stressed the peculiarity of American political outcomes. Among other puzzles, American history has been studied with a view to asking why America never had the kind of strong state authority found in Europe, why it never developed strong labor or socialist parties, and why it came to offer less generous social policies than other industrialized nations.

Looming over the entire APD enterprise is Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America* (1955). Hartz argued that the special character of American politics is best explained by the overwhelming liberal, or Lockean, consensus in its political culture, which resulted from the historical absence of feudalism and entrenched class structures. Thus, American political culture is shaped by a general agreement on principles of democracy, the market economy, individualism, and limited government. This liberal consensus means that state power has been viewed suspiciously and that socialist movements have generally found America a barren environment. Many of the studies in the field of American Political Development have disputed or qualified Hartz's position.

One line of scholarship argues that America has in fact seen much more ideological diversity than Hartz allows, thus raising questions about the adequacy of the liberal consensus as an overarching explanation for American politics. Among those who insist on ideological diversity, one prominent tack has been to insist that liberalism itself is not a monolithic doctrine. Liberalism instead denotes a family of political theories often in sharp conflict with one another while still retaining some common principles. In *The Lincoln Persuasion: Remaking American Liberalism* (1993), J. David Greenstone argues that American liberalism before the Civil War was divided into two schools: a humanist variety emphasizing the freedom from restraint, and a reform type, influenced by Christian beliefs, fostering egalitarian moral improvement.

Another common way of demonstrating liberalism's variability has been to show sharp historical discontinuities in its meaning. Theodore Lowi's *The End of Liberalism: The Second Republic of the United States* (1979) depicts American liberalism before the New Deal as dominated by a *laissez faire* belief in the virtues of the free market. After the 1930s

a new public philosophy of interest group liberalism took hold that not only accepted the necessity of pervasive government regulation but also lauded it as the democratic result of free competition among interest groups in the policy process, in effect transferring the old confidence in the market model from the private to the public sphere. Lowi argues that this transformation of American liberalism fed the expansion of government and produced a policy process under no one's authoritative control, leaving governmental power prone to arbitrary administrative discretion and ineffectiveness. More recent accounts still stress the key role of the New Deal era in changing American liberalism. They often emphasize the way reformers of that period justified social welfare programs on the basis of each individual's right to security. Sidney Milkis' *The President and the Parties: The Transformation of the American Party System Since the New Deal* (1994) and David Plotke's *Building a Democratic Order: Remaking American Liberalism in the 1930s and 1940s* (1996) both present this picture of the liberal tradition's transformation.

Another approach has been to insist on the existence of ideological traditions within American political culture that have been competitive with liberal principles. The most favored alternate ideology is republicanism. The largest claim for its impact is actually made by several historians who see early American political culture as dominated by a civic republican ideology, rooted in classical philosophy, that stressed the promotion of virtue and self-sacrifice for the common good. Gordon Wood's *The Creation of the American Republic* (1969) and J. G. A. Pocock's *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (1975) are the key works making this argument. Only later in the nineteenth century was this gradually replaced by liberalism's emphasis on individual self-interest and freedom from restraint. Michael Sandel's *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (1996) has updated and expanded this line of thought, arguing that the public philosophy of republicanism was not replaced by liberalism until the period of the New Deal, at which point signs of crisis and dysfunction became more apparent. The account that has sought to read liberal ideas out of America's founding era has been subject to fierce and repeated attack. Joyce Appleby's *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (1984) and Thomas Pangle's *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism* (1988) have both strongly reasserted the liberal origins of the American political tradition.

Some have sought to show the coexistence of liberal and republican ideas. In a work that combines political culture with the institutional

approach to American political development, James Morone's *The Democratic Wish: Popular Participation and the Limits of American Government* (1995) argues that periodic expansions in the governing capacity of the American state have usually resulted from a sudden surge of popular participation rooted in what Morone calls the "democratic wish," which consists of a united people rising up in republican fashion to solve problems and casting off their engrained liberal distrust of public power. However, the people's passion and belief in their unity inevitably fade, and the state institutions created or strengthened during times of apparent universal consensus, like the regulatory agencies of the Progressive era, often prove less prepared to govern when normal politics, dominated by conflicting private interests, returns.

Rogers Smith's *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in America* (1997) also argues for diverse ideological traditions in American politics. In a study of citizenship law and policy from the founding era through the early twentieth century, Smith identifies three distinct political philosophies at work: liberal, republican and ascriptive. The third one, Smith contends, expressed a thorough ideological opposition to the other two that justified racial and sexual hierarchies on the basis of scientific or religious beliefs. Its long prominence on the intellectual scene explains much about America's slow historical progress to full equality.

Another important approach of scholars in American Political Development has been to argue that America's institutions, not its ideology, explain the distinctive shape of the country's political outcomes. An important early book adopting this line of argument was Stephen Skowronek's *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacity, 1877–1920* (1982), which argues that the comparative lack of effective hierarchical control in the American state results from its particular course of institutional development, not from an overpowering anti-statist ideology. Efforts to build a modern administrative system were hampered by deeply entrenched political parties that thrived on the distribution of government jobs for political patronage. Party organizations, which provided an instrument of coordination among the branches of the government, lost much of their power in the early twentieth century, leading to sustained combat among the different branches of government for control of the developing administrative state. The result was a burgeoning bureaucracy influenced by many but adequately controlled and directed by none. Covering much of the same period, Richard Bensel has written a series of books on the long politi-

cal conflict between America's industrializing core regions and the agrarian periphery. In the most recent, *The Political Economy of American Industrialization* (2000), he argues that during the late nineteenth century a careful division of labor among the three branches of the federal government safeguarded the policies that ensured the triumph of industrialization.

The failure of American labor to develop a widespread and vigorous socialist movement has also attracted the attention of APD institutional scholars. One explanation has attributed the result to the repeated use of judicial review by American courts to strike down protective labor legislation, which gradually stripped the unions of extensive political hopes or ambitions. William Forbath's *Law and the Shaping of the American Labor Movement* (1989) and Victoria Hattam's *Labor Visions and State Power: Origins of Business Unionism in the United States* (1994) both emphasize this explanation for union weakness. In a slightly different key, Karen Orren's *Belated Feudalism: Labor, the Law and Liberal Political Development in the United States* (1991) has argued that unions were long hampered by the courts' enforcement of common law labor rules that effectively reproduced in America a kind of feudal subordination in workers' legal status and rights. Other works like David Robertson's *Capital, Labor and State* (2000) argue that labor's political potential was not only stymied by the power of the courts but also by the general fragmentation of power following from federalism and the separation of powers.

Finally, the peculiar American welfare state, with its comparatively less generous social provision, has called forth several important recent studies. In *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (1992), Theda Skocpol questions whether America was in fact always behind the states of Western Europe in the development of the welfare state. During the nineteenth century, patronage-oriented political parties expanded a Civil War veteran pension program to a size that surpassed contemporary social provision schemes in other countries. But this patronage-driven expansion of veterans' pensions caused later reformers to fear that increased social provision would be mismanaged by a corrupt political system. America also adopted an innovative scheme of social aid for mothers in the 1920s, but the chance for a distinctly American "maternal welfare state" faded away as the women's movement failed to maintain unity and to endorse the goal of supporting motherhood. For a later period of welfare state development, Edward Amenta's *Bold Relief: Institutional Politics and the Ori-*

gins of Modern American Social Policy (1998) argues that the New Deal's progress in expanding social provision was slowed and even partially reversed by a political system that contained both a large, weakly democratic region—the segregated South—and numerous areas where the party system remained patronage dominated and unsupportive of programmatic goals.

Louis Hartz's case for the dominance of liberal ideas in shaping American politics has sparked a wide variety of responses in APD scholarship. But the most recent examination of why socialism failed in the United States, *It Didn't Happen Here* (2000) by Seymour Lipset and Gary Marks, still reserves a significant role for American anti-statist beliefs. APD scholars may ultimately find it easier to qualify the reach of Hartz' arguments than to eliminate them from any possible relevance.

Congress

In recent decades, work on the United States Congress has shifted from describing institutional norms and practices to a variety of rational choice approaches. However, methodological unity has not prevented intense controversy over actual findings. Scholars now agree that congressional behavior and organization are driven by the efforts of individual members to achieve a limited set of important goals, but they differ sharply on which goals actually matter.

During the 1950s and 1960s, political scientists who studied Congress focused on uncovering widespread norms and practices that gave structure to the legislative process. Donald Matthews' *U.S. Senators and Their World* (1960) examined the norms that shaped behavior in the Senate, while Richard Fenno's *The Power of the Purse: Appropriations Politics in Congress* (1966) did the same for the House Appropriations Committee. Nelson Polsby's "The Institutionalization of the House of Representatives" (1968) broke new ground in explaining the historical development of congressional organization. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, House members became much more professionalized while the institution as a whole became more stable and consistent in its procedures. However, Nelson Polsby and Eric Schickler's review essay "Landmarks in the Study of Congress Since 1945" (2002) shows that since the 1970s this institutional approach rapidly began to lose favor in the face of new rational choice theories that explained congressional organization and behavior in terms of the goals pursued by individual members.

Of the various goal-driven accounts of Congress, the most developed one explains the institution in light of its members' desire for reelection. In *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (1974), David Mayhew argues that the contemporary organization of Congress is almost entirely determined by the reelection imperative. Power is decentralized in various committees to allow members to secure particularized benefits for their districts. The legislative process allows for so-called position taking, or avoidance, on a limitless variety of issues without requiring the actual production of legislation in more than a small minority of cases. Morris Fiorina's *Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment* (1977) extended this theme with work claiming that congressmen have significantly increased their reelection prospects over the past few decades by positioning themselves to help their constituents obtain benefits from a large and complex bureaucracy. The success of this strategy in increasing incumbents' margins of victory has actually given Congress a perverse incentive to make bureaucracy ever larger and more complicated, leaving constituents in increasing need of their congressman's help. R. Douglas Arnold's *The Logic of Congressional Action* (1990) later offered a sophisticated model explaining when members of Congress, given their fixation on reelection, will be more sensitive to the preferences of organized interests or the broader unorganized public.

Richard Fenno has taken a different approach to the motivations of congressmen in his works on House members in their home constituencies, *Homestyle: House Members in Their Districts* (1978) and *Congress at the Grassroots: Representational Change in the South* (2000). Instead of beginning with simple, uni-dimensional assumptions of behavior, Fenno's approach has been to observe empirically—in the fashion of an anthropologist using the method of thick description—the activities of members of Congress, both within the institution and while running for office. These studies, while less rigorous than some of the rational choice approaches, are richer in nuance and in promoting an understanding of the feel of the institution.

Many scholars have disagreed with the dominant rational choice assumption that the desire for reelection can explain almost all significant aspects of congressional behavior and organization. Lawrence Dodd's "Congress and Quest for Power" (1977) argues that Congress alternates between decentralizing eras, during which personal power and reelection concerns dominate, and periods when fears for Congress' policymaking capacity lead members to sacrifice their individual prerogatives in favor of effective central leadership. Joseph Bessette's *The Mild Voice of Reason* (1994) shows that the Congress often demonstrates a

capacity for deliberation, or reasoning on the merits, so that the outcome of congressional policy decisions must be understood in part in terms of the merit of the arguments made by legislators and interest groups. In a rational choice version of a similar idea, Keith Krehbiel's *Information and Legislative Organization* (1991) argues that the various committees of Congress are centers of policy expertise relied on by the other members, who lack the time and resources to gather information on every decision they must make.

The current upsurge of party polarization in Congress has bolstered political scientists who claim political parties are the most important force shaping the institution. Gary Cox and Matthew McCubbins' *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House* (1993) argues that congressional organization is best understood as being dominated by a majority party cartel. Other scholars propose a theory of conditional party government, in which the extent of majority party influence depends on the unity of party member policy preferences and the ideological distance between the ruling party and the opposition. David Rohde's *Parties and Leaders in the Post-Reform House* (1991) and John Aldrich's and David Rohde's "The Consequences of Party Organization in the House" (2000) are prominent works making this argument.

Recently, there has been a major attempt to move past single cause explanations of Congress. The recognition of multiple motives has never been absent in Congressional scholarship. Richard Fenno's *Congressmen in Committees* (1973) argued that different committees appealed to different member goals of reelection, power within Congress, and good policy outcomes. But the quest for parsimonious explanations generally led rational choice scholars to search for one dominant goal or motive. By contrast, Eric Schickler's *Disjointed Pluralism: Institutional Innovation and the Development of the United States Congress* (2001) makes the case that it is the irreducible multiplicity of motives that explains Congress' institutional structure and its development over time. Typically, congressional reforms have been deliberately shaped to appeal to a number of different concerns held by members: reelection, individual power within the institution, congressional capacity, party power, and policy outcomes, to name some of the most important. The institutional structure of Congress is marked by a layered pattern of historical development in which more recent institutional changes are added to older ones that were designed to serve different types of goals and interests. The differing motivations and objectives behind these successive reforms mean that they are in tension within one another, which can lead to conflicts and generate calls for new reforms.

Schickler's work leads him to use the techniques of historical institutionalism as well as rational choice. Only in-depth historical research can fully uncover the multiplicity of interests behind institutional change and demonstrate the dynamic following from Congress' layered pattern of development. Other instances of historical institutionalism within the Congress literature have been rare, with important exceptions like Elaine Swift's account in *The Making of an American Senate: Reconstitutive Change in Congress, 1787–1841* (1996) of the Senate's early development from something like an advisory council to an equal partner in the legislative process. Even when there has been more attention to congressional history, the intent has often been to provide more illustrations of various rational choice models. David Brady and Matthew McCubbins' edited collection *Party, Process and Institutional Change in Congress: New Perspectives on the History of Congress* (2002) provides numerous examples of this tendency.

Congress scholars have also given much attention to the question of divided government, which refers to a situation in which the majority party of one or both houses of Congress is different from that of the presidency. The prevalence of divided government over the last fifty years has sparked a good deal of research. One line of work, exemplified by Morris Fiorina's *Divided Government* (1995), has tried to explain the split ticket voting that produces divided government, with opinion divided between those who see it as the product of intentional balancing by voters and those who see it as largely random and accidental. Other research centers on the consequences of divided government. It was a long-held belief that divided government produced gridlock or inaction on pressing policy issues. James Sundquist's "Needed: A Political Theory for the New Era of Coalition in the United States" (1989) is perhaps the best statement of this early consensus. However, David Mayhew's *Divided We Govern: Party Control, Lawmaking and Investigations, 1946–1990* (1991) found that important legislation was just as likely to be passed in periods of divided party control as during unified government. Subsequent scholarship, such as Sarah Binder's "The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock, 1947–1996" (1999), has pointed out some gridlock effect from divided government, but it generally agrees with Mayhew that the mere fact of divided or unified party control makes less difference than previously thought and that the more important factor is the degree of ideological polarization that exists at any time between the parties. Moreover, Keith Krehbiel's *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking* (1998) argues that the supermajoritarian require-

ments of the legislative process—a sixty vote majority to stop debate in the Senate and the two-thirds majority to override a presidential veto—mean that most significant bills have to pass with large bipartisan majorities whether there is a divided government or not.

Courts and Public Law

The subgroup on the judiciary is one of the largest in the American politics field. It is also one of the most deeply fractured. Before the behavioral revolution, examination of the meaning of the Constitution and the legal rules defining governmental powers occupied a central place in the discipline. Much of the work was in the form of arguments about the proper or sound interpretation of constitutional provisions. Walter Berns' *Taking the Constitution Seriously* (1987) and Edward Corwin's *The "Higher Law" Background to American Constitutional Law* (1955) are prominent works in this tradition. Some of the works on the Supreme Court sought to describe its method of functioning and also to analyze prevailing legal philosophies and judicial statesmanship. Alexander Bickel *The Least Dangerous Branch: The Supreme Court at the Bar of Politics* (1962) and Henry Abraham's *The Judiciary: The Supreme Court in the Governmental Process* (1977) both fit into this pattern. David O'Brien's *Storm Center: The Supreme Court in American Politics* (2002) has brought this type of scholarship forward into the modern era.

The movement towards quantitative social science in the 1970s pushed this legalistic approach towards the periphery of the field and produced an effort to fashion a new empirical account of judicial behavior. Judicial behavioralists now coexist uneasily with those who hold to traditional constitutional analysis and theory. Within the study of judicial behavior, the most sustained effort has been to attack the notion that judicial decisions are driven exclusively or even primarily by the law. Just like other political actors, judges are moved by their ideology and policy preferences, by their attitudes and not by legal principles or rules. Most work on this theme has centered on the Supreme Court, the most important and least constrained part of the judicial system. Harold Spaeth and Jeffrey Segal have collaborated on a number of substantial works, including *Majority Rule or Minority Will?: Adherence to Precedent in the U.S. Supreme Court* (1999) and *The Supreme Court and the Attitudinal Model Revisited* (2002), dedicated to showing the pervasive impact of attitudinal influences, such as ideology, on the votes of Supreme Court justices.

Challenges to the attitudinal model within judicial behavior research have sought to find ways that other important motivations, including respect for correct legal outcomes, could coexist with ideological influence. Lawrence Baum's *The Puzzle of Judicial Behavior* (1997) presents a thorough overview of these alternative approaches. Recently, some studies have applied psychological theory to argue that judges could actively pursue the goal of making sound legal decisions even as their policy attitudes give a certain bias to the final outcomes. C. K. Rowland and Robert Carp's *Politics and Judgment in the Federal District Courts* (1996) presents one possible psychological model that would allow for such a mix of influences. David Klein's *Lawmaking in the United States Courts of Appeal* (2002) goes much further in actually testing this theory and finds both ideological and legal forces at work in judicial decisions.

Another important challenge to a purely attitudinal theory of judicial behavior springs from rational choice theory. By this account, judicial decision-making is inherently strategic. Rather than simply voting according to their policy preferences, judges take into account the preferences of other important actors and vote in light of them to ensure the best possible outcome, even if this means abandoning their most favored policy in favor of a second or third choice. In *The Choices Justices Make* (1997), Lee Epstein and Jack Knight argue that Supreme Court justices regularly adjust their votes and decisions both to gain the support of other justices and to stave off possible adverse reactions from the other branches of government. The phenomenon of bargaining within the Court has recently received additional attention in the work of Forrest Maltzman and his colleagues, *Crafting Law on the Supreme Court: The Collegial Game* (2000).

A subsidiary branch of the courts field deals with the impact and implementation of judicial decisions. The most prominent work within it is Gerald Rosenberg's *The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change?* (1991), which argues that the Supreme Court is rarely able to force through sweeping social changes on its own. Although the Court's independence and its authority of judicial review has led many activists to hope it could enforce egalitarian reforms when other branches were unwilling, Rosenberg insists the judiciary's paucity of tools to readily enforce compliance means it usually cannot prevail against determined opposition from other political actors. Other studies of judicial impact, such as Bradley Canon and Charles Johnson's *Judicial Policies: Implementation and Impact* (1998), challenge Rosenberg on the question of

how often such determined opposition really arises. Furthermore, in *Between the Lines: Interpreting Welfare Rights* (1994), Shep Melnick demonstrates that in America's system of separated powers, the existence of multiple veto points means that forces sympathetic to the judiciary's position only have to control one hurdle in the legislative process to block action overturning a decision.

Among works separate from the Rosenberg controversy, Robert Kagan's *Adversarial Legalism: The American Way of Law* (2001) looks at judicial implementation in terms of its role within the entire political system. He argues that while the United States government has grown almost as activist as those abroad, the nation's refusal to adopt a large centralized bureaucracy with clear authority means that many policies carried out through administrative means in other countries are enforced in America by the judiciary through adversarial procedures. The courts are further empowered by a fragmented and decentralized political structure that often leaves the courts to sort out institutional disagreements. The result is a court-dominated system of policy implementation that is remarkably open to popular participation, but at the frequent cost of uncertainty, inconsistency and deep inefficiency.

Alongside the prosperous judicial behavior movement, a growing band of historical institutionalists has sprung up within the courts section during the last two decades. The work of several of them is collected in Cornell Clayton and Howard Gillman's *Supreme Court Decision Making: New Institutionalist Approaches* (1999). A frequent theme among them is the notion that constitutional and legal principles cannot be considered mere smokescreens for decisions driven by raw interest. Instead, these ideas can set the bounds of what judges see as legitimate and proper. For example, Howard Gillman's *The Constitution Besieged: The Rise and Demise of Lochner Era Police Powers Jurisprudence* (1993) argues that the economic freedom decisions of the Supreme Court at the turn of the twentieth century were not dictated by business interests or by the simple policy preferences of the justices; rather, they were rooted in a constitutional vision of equality that had achieved the status of a widespread consensus by the time of the Court's decisions. Among other historical institutionalist work, Mark Graber's "The Nonmajoritarian Difficulty: Legislative Deference to the Judiciary" (1993) demonstrates how other government actors have empowered the courts throughout American history as a way to serve their own political needs.

Finally, the kind of historical and theoretical work on the judiciary and constitutional law that dominated this field before the behavioral

revolution still survives. The work of these traditional scholars, which was part of a common enterprise with constitutional theorists and historians in the law schools, has been bolstered by the arrival of the historical institutionalists, who are more self-conscious about their methodological approaches and their relationship to the other social sciences. Political scientists have made numerous recent contributions to debates over constitutional interpretation, including Leslie Friedman Goldstein's *In Defense of the Text* (1991), Keith Whittington's *Constitutional Interpretation: Textual Meaning, Original Intent and Judicial Review* (2001), and Hadley Arkes' *Beyond the Constitution* (1992). There has also been creative historical work on the role of other governmental institutions in constitutional interpretation and on the role of the people at large, such as Keith Whittington's *Constitutional Construction: Divided Powers and Constitutional Meaning* (1999) and Wayne Moore's *Constitutional Rights and Powers of the People* (1996).

The Presidency

Studies of the presidency have generally retained a traditional and historical bent even after the advent of behavioralism and rational choice. This tendency no doubt has had much to do with the limited number of cases involved and the uniqueness of each presidency, both characteristics that resist lending themselves to the elaboration of universal and general theories. The field of presidential studies has followed its own path of theoretical development that has focused more on substantive rather than methodological questions.

The field underwent an important shift from a more legalistic and functional approach—found in Edward Corwin's *The President: Offices and Powers, 1787–1984* (1984), Clinton Rossiter's *The American Presidency* (1956) and more recently Richard Pious' *The American Presidency* (1979)—to the realist approach pioneered by Richard Neustadt's *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents* (1990). Neustadt studied the levers and instruments of power relative to the demands placed on the office, viewing them as they might be seen by a president attempting to achieve certain objectives. Neustadt's view from the inside discovered a gap between the extremely high expectations of legislative leadership and policy accomplishment placed on the presidency and the limited formal power or authority that the president possesses under the Constitution. One way in which presidents attempt to close this gap is to use their position to persuade other political actors in a bargaining process, backed by whatever degree of personal prestige the president can gath-

er. For Neustadt, presidents always found themselves in a situation of a deficit of formal power, unable to meet the burden of expectations placed upon them.

This claim of a deficit of power, at least as viewed from the inside, was indirectly challenged by many scholars in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, who argued that for the good of the system the presidency was far too powerful. The most famous work in this line of thought was Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s *The Imperial Presidency* (1973), a book whose title had so much influence on practical politics that it helped spearhead a series of measures adopted in the 1970s to restrict the growth of power of the office. Since that time there has been a lively debate on whether the powers of the presidency have been expanding or contracting, and on what factors might account for these changes.

A good deal of the literature on the presidency has focused on the idea of an historical development from a pre-modern presidency, which stood in the shadows of the Congress, to a modern presidency, which is seen as the institutional fulcrum for action for the entire system. Sidney Milkis' *The President and the Parties* (1993) advanced an account of the modern presidency that locates its origins in the late 1930s, when Franklin Roosevelt abandoned any serious attempt to govern through his political party and resolved to make policy increasingly through administrative means within the executive branch. The federal administrative state would henceforth be the power base of a new personalized and plebiscitary presidential leadership holding itself apart from old partisan attachments. Though this plan to increase the power of the presidency made a good deal of headway under Roosevelt and his successors, the long term decay of the bond between the presidency and political parties deprived modern presidents of a stable base of popular support and eventually made it difficult for them to control the administrative state that they had created.

Other scholars chart the development of the presidency in terms of its relationship to the shaping of public opinion and to the techniques of popular persuasion. Jeffrey Tulis' *The Rhetorical Presidency* (1987) argues that throughout much of America's early history presidents were tightly bound by norms that discouraged popular oratory and practically forbade appeals for popular pressure on other institutions of government. The norms were rooted in the founding era's fear of demagoguery and its corrosive effect on republican self-government. It was thought essential to keep the public's immediate passions and desires from overwhelming the autonomous deliberations of their representatives. These

ideas retained their force until the beginning of the twentieth century, when a new conception of the president as leader and shaper of public opinion took hold. Afterwards, presidents were expected to mobilize popular influence and bring it to bear directly on the policy process. Samuel Kernell's *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership* (1997) dates the important change in presidential rhetoric much more recently, during the late 1960s and 1970s. Only then did presidents shift from relying on a bargaining strategy with Congress to the increasing use of coercive public appeals that pressure congressmen by rousing their constituents to support presidential initiatives. Kernell finds the cause of this shift in the decline of political parties and stable interest group coalitions in Congress, which deprived presidents of strong and reliable bargaining partners in the legislative arena. Presidents opted more and more to go public.

A number of studies argue there has been more historical continuity than change in presidency. For David Nichols in *The Myth of the Modern Presidency* (1994), characteristics typically assigned to the modern presidency, including legislative leadership and the mobilization of public opinion, have been part of the office since the framing of the Constitution, which was designed to further the kind of vigorous presidential leadership that some see as a relatively recent phenomenon. The presidency seems transformed only because the entire government has become much larger and more activist during the twentieth century. From a different direction, Charles Jones' *The Presidency in a Separated System* (1994) shows that much of the alleged change to the modern presidency has been of one of the perception (and hope) of academics and journalists rather than of reality. Jones agrees that the presidency has changed, but he cautions against notions that the president in the modern era fully dominates the policy process. The president and Congress have been and emphatically remain tandem institutions, bound together in a collaborative relationship in which policy innovations can be initiated by either branch.

An ambitious recent attempt to understand the presidency in historical time is Stephen Skowronek's *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton* (1997). Skowronek argues that the nature of presidencies is shaped more by a recurring cycle than by a straight-line development from pre-modern to modern times. Presidencies fall into one of a succession of types, defined by their relationship to the existing order of partisan coalitions and settled policies: *reconstructive* presidents who remake the political order by forging new ruling

coalitions and policy departures; *affiliated* presidents who work to defend and extend these commitments; and eventually *disjunctive* presidents who preside over the collapse of the existing political order, when partisan alliances become unsustainable and old policy principles can no longer resolve new problems. In this cyclical approach, certain twentieth-century presidents in fact have more in common with certain nineteenth-century presidents than they do with other twentieth-century presidents. However, while this cycle has been repeating itself throughout American history, Skowronek added the idea that there has been a continuous and uninterrupted trend of institutional thickening, an accumulation of entrenched interests and institutions that have increased the resistance to would-be reconstructive presidents who seek dramatic change.

There have been two other works, traditional in their methodological approach, that have made a mark on the modern study of the presidency. One is Harvey Mansfield's *Taming the Prince: The Ambivalence of Modern Executive Power* (1989), which traces the development of the entire idea of the executive power in Western political thought from Aristotle to modern times. The executive power implies a particular way of viewing the whole of politics—a way that stresses the need to cope with threats to a nation's security and survival. America's Founders were among the major innovators in making this formidable yet necessary power compatible with constitutional government. The other work, Fred Greenstein's suggestively named book *The Hidden-Hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader* (1982), confirms the proposition that one can never understand the presidency apart from a study of particular presidents. In a fascinating account of Dwight Eisenhower's presidency, Greenstein increases both our theoretical understanding of the office and of the statesmanship of President Eisenhower.

Recently, a number of presidency studies have used a rational choice approach. Charles Cameron's *Veto Bargaining: Presidents and the Politics of Negative Bargaining* (2000) shows how vetoes and veto threats are most often part of a sequential bargaining process with Congress in shaping legislation, rather than simply a way to stop legislation entirely. Cameron therefore suggests that the veto, and by extension the entire constitutional scheme of separated powers, is not an antiquated and impractical barrier to public action, but instead a well-functioning means of securing moderate policies with broad public support. Andrew Rudavelege's *Managing the President's Program: Presidential Leadership and Legislative Policy Formation* (2002) uses a transaction cost model to

predict whether presidential policy proposals will be designed in a centralized process by the White House staff or left instead to the executive agencies. Though it is a recent entrant to presidency scholarship, the rational choice approach already seems better placed as a future competitor to the established historical tendency of the field than behavioralist work. Gary King and Lyn Ragsdale's *The Elusive Executive: Discovering Statistical Patterns in the Presidency* (1988) is a representative behavioralist study of the executive. The tendency in that strand of presidency research has been to quantify various kinds of presidential decisions and undertake an often-unavailing search for significant patterns and regularities.

Political Parties

Research on American political parties has focused on two different questions: first, the changing power and role of parties as organizations and institutions; and second, the capacity of parties to serve as vehicles for the expression of forces of fundamental change, especially through periodic voter realignments. The use of new and different methodological approaches has influenced research in both of these areas.

Political scientists and historians alike have sought to understand the emergence of political parties. As Richard Hofstadter's *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780–1840* (1969) shows, parties first had to overcome early doubts about their legitimacy that cast them as dangerous and divisive factions. Yet they soon came to be seen as essential institutions of American politics, necessary for restraining personalized, demagogic appeals by presidential candidates and for connecting the public with their government. James Ceaser's *Presidential Selection: Theory and Development* (1979) and Sidney Milkis' *Political Parties and Constitutional Government* (1999) both present full accounts of the parties' rise. During the nineteenth century, parties mobilized high levels of voter participation and dominated many government operations. Joel Silbey's *The American Political Nation, 1838–1896* (1991) is among the best studies of parties in this era. However, the turn of the century saw a sharp change in the status of political parties. The Progressive movement attacked parties as corrupt organizations that stood between the people and their own government and that hindered the emergence of effective presidential leadership. Progressives turned to the public regulation of party activities, most strikingly in the form of mandatory, state-run primary elections that took the nomination of party candidates away from the organizations

and gave it to a popular electorate, thereby weakening the parties' power as autonomous institutions. Leon Epstein's *Political Parties in the American Mold* (1986) ably depicts this shift in the parties' fortunes. The two major parties have a current status akin to that of public utilities, in the sense that a pervasive scheme of state regulation both props them up as useful institutions and controls many of their activities.

Debates about party realignment make up another important part of the field of research on political parties. A line of influential works claimed that America typically has a majority party that sets the course of public policy and has the durable support of most voters. Roughly every thirty-two years, changing circumstances and rise of new issues have resulted in a set of critical elections that produces a realignment of voter support, creating a new majority party and a new direction in public policy. Partisan realignment is thus the driving engine of American politics over the long term. Walter Dean Burnham's *Critical Elections and Mainsprings of American Politics* (1971) and James Sundquist's *Dynamics of the Party System* (1983) are classic works in the realignment tradition. The theory has been extremely influential, but it has recently been subject to increased criticism. One problem is the lack of a single critical election and durable party realignment since the 1930s, which has led to arguments that the realignment process no longer operates, at least in the same way, as it did before. This is the conclusion of several scholars in Byron Shafer's edited collection *The End of Realignment?* (1991). A general decline in the percentage of partisan voters during the last forty years and the corresponding increase of political independents may have eliminated the necessary conditions for classic realignments. A more radical challenge comes from David Mayhew's *Partisan Realignments: A Critique of the Genre* (2002), which argues that even before the modern period, American history shows no regular pattern of critical elections followed by party realignment. Though it occurs occasionally, party realignment is simply inadequate as an explanatory framework for American politics.

Recent historical institutionalist work has looked at the role of political parties in the development of America's administrative state. Martin Shefter's *Parties and the State: The American Historical Experience* (1994) argued that the entrenchment of patronage-oriented parties before the development of a strong central state made the development of an autonomous, professional bureaucracy almost impossible for much of American history. Another recent institutionalist effort reexamines the importance of ideology in American political parties. Though

American parties have often been considered to lack strong ideological beliefs, John Gerring's *Party Ideologies in America, 1828–1996* (1998) shows they have long been sharply divided on questions of political principle. The main American parties are more conservative than most other parties of the democratic world, but the ideological distance between them is still significant. Furthermore, the parties' ideologies tend to be highly stable, lasting in their basic structure for generations at a time before serious change.

Rational choice work on the parties has sought to model their formation and the competition between them. John Aldrich's *Why Parties? The Origins and Transformation of Political Parties in America* (1995) argues that politicians form parties to solve collective action problems inherent in mobilizing voters and in passing legislation once in office. Parties also provide one way to avoid the unstable, cycling majorities predicted by social choice models. Aldrich drew in part on the Anthony Downs' classic *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957), which has also been important for its theory of party competition. Downs predicted that in a two-party system the policy positions of the parties would converge on those of the median voter. Since then, models of party competition, often differing sharply from Downs, have been one of the main preoccupations of rational choice scholarship. John Adams' *Party Competition and Responsible Government* (2001) and John Roemer's *Political Competition: Theory and Applications* (2001) are recent additions to this literature.

Political Behavior

The field of political behavior typically focuses on political phenomena accessible through its best-developed research technique, the mass opinion survey. The field has focused on studying the nature of mass opinion, the influence of opinion on citizens' voting decisions, and the sources of political participation. Political behavior—as the name indicates—has been the stronghold of the behavioral movement within American politics, although rational choice methods have played an influential role in recent years.

A traditional line of political behavior research looked at what might be termed the quality of public opinion: how much does the public know about politics, and how does it use that information to make political judgments? From early on, results have shown that much of the public has limited political knowledge. Phillip Converse's "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics" (1964) is the classic early statement of

this conclusion. Surveys show large portions of the populace do not know basic facts about their government, pay little attention to ongoing political debates, and are unable to relate their opinions to any ideological or partisan framework. Policy opinions are often inconsistent with each other and unstable over time.

Scholars now seek to understand how people form the opinions they express, given the low amount of information most have about politics. John Zaller's *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (1992) argues that except for a well-informed minority, people do not have settled opinions about most political questions. When asked to give their view, they quickly average across a mix of considerations that come to mind as relevant. But this mix changes as different considerations become more or less salient over time, or when different considerations are triggered by different ways of framing a question. Public opinion can also be molded by elite debates presented through the media, but the effect here operates mostly on the part of the populace that is middle range in its attention to politics. Those who are highly attentive already have firmly fixed views, while those who are least attentive are generally too unaware of political issues to process arguments in the media even if they are exposed to them.

Another group of scholars has nevertheless attempted to show how the public can make sound political judgments even with limited amounts of information. The original statement of this position by V. O. Key's *The Responsible Electorate: Rationality in Presidential Voting, 1936–1960* (1966) argued that while the mass of citizens may not have a sophisticated or structured opinion about matters, large numbers of people come to general assessments about how things are going in the nation and world and about whether political leaders are handling affairs well or poorly. Some works argue that people regularly make rational political choices through the use of shortcuts or heuristics, often drawn from everyday life, including personal experience with government services and observations of different groups' support for different candidates. Paul Sniderman's *Reasoning and Choice* (1991) and Samuel Popkin's *The Reasoning Voter* (1994) both take this tack. Benjamin Page and Robert Shapiro's *The Rational Public* (1992) asserts that public opinion in the aggregate, as opposed to within individuals, is highly stable. When it does change abruptly, it does so in rational ways. The random variations in the opinions of individuals cancel themselves out.

The question of what determines voting decisions is another longstanding issue in political behavior research. For a long time, the

leading explanation centered on the partisan identification of voters. Political scientists argued that voters typically became attached to a political party while they were young adults and kept that attachment throughout the rest of their lives. This partisan identification strongly shaped their vote choice, as well as their evaluation of candidates and officeholders. The work of Angus Campbell and his colleagues in *The American Voter* (1960) was a pioneering work stressing the importance of partisan identification. In keeping with the strong behavioralist emphasis on irrational impulses and attachments, partisan identification was considered a fixed attitude largely impervious to changing circumstances or new beliefs. Voters generally inherit their partisan identification from their parents and then hold to it, much like adherence to a religion or loyalty to a sports team. However, this conception of voting behavior has come under strong attack. One reason is that voters have changed. As Martin Wattenberg's *The Decline of American Political Parties, 1952–1996* (1998) shows, they no longer are as loyal to political parties, and the number of independents who identify with no party has grown sharply over the last thirty years.

Another ground of attack is a revision of what partisan identification means. Scholars influenced by rational choice theory argue that voters are most influenced by retrospective evaluations. They vote for or against the incumbent party based on their evaluation of its past performance in office, particularly its performance on economic growth. In this theory, party identification is not an irrational fixed attitude. Rather, it is a running tally of the voter's evaluations of how each party has performed in office. Morris Fiorina's *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections* (1981) laid the foundation for this approach. The theory gained additional prominence because of the success political scientists had in using economic conditions to forecast the vote in presidential elections. However, the failure of economic conditions to predict the 2000 election has taken some of the shine off this model of voting behavior. In works like *Partisan Hearts and Minds* (2002) by Donald Green and his colleagues, there has also been a spirited recent revival of the old theory of party identification as a fixed attitude. In addition, studies like James Campbell's *The American Campaign: U.S. Presidential Campaigns and the National Vote* (2000) have begun to emphasize the influence of the actual campaigns and the events that occur during them. Both party identification and retrospective evaluation theories tended to argue that votes are largely determined by conditions in place before the campaigns even begin.

The studies above largely discussed voting in the context of presidential general elections. Political scientists have also examined voting behavior in other contexts. Larry Bartels' *Presidential Primaries and Dynamics of Public Choice* (1988) presents an account of presidential primary elections, creating a typology of different campaigns and a theory of when momentum effects can sweep an unknown candidate to the nomination. Gary Jacobson's *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (2001) offers a thorough examination of congressional elections, including the effect of the incumbency advantage on the vote.

Political participation has also attracted a good deal of research interest. In *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (1995), Sidney Verba and his colleagues focus on the impact of unequal resources on civic participation by different classes and groups within the public. Others concentrate on explaining why political participation, and in particular voter turnout, has declined in America during the last forty years. Steven Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen's *Mobilization, Participation and Democracy in America* (1993) offers a rational choice account based on the costs and benefits of voting for citizens. They argue that a decline in mobilization by political parties has had a particularly strong effect in reducing voter participation by eliminating some of the encouragements to vote.

In *Bowling Alone: The Decline and Revival of American Community* (2000), Robert Putnam has broadened the modern study of political participation by connecting it with the Tocquevillian problem of withdrawal from the public sphere. Putnam argues that there has been a decline in all forms of civic participation over the past generation, of which voting is only the most obvious. He has spoken of our atrophying social capital, the skills and habits that make social cooperation possible, such as joining and networking. This change has many root causes, but Putnam places much of the blame on generational change and the deleterious impact of television viewing, which has drawn citizens away from face to face contact in communal life. Putnam's study illustrates that while the methods of study employed today have become more sophisticated, the importance of political science research will be determined in the final analysis by its ability to speak to the abiding questions and problems of the political world.

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